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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

HINTS ON THE CARE OF PELTRIES.

The care of hides includes skinning, curing, and tanning. As a rule, the first step in skinning an animal is to make a cut along the under side from chin to tip of tail, and from each foot along the inner side of the leg to intersect the main cut nearly at right angles. Fur bearers, however, excepting beavers, the pelts of which are sent to market flat, are slit across beneath the tail from heel to heel, the skin being reversed as the body is withdrawn. The tail and the base of the ears should be skinned out.

Fresh skins should be divested of loose fat and muscle, and then either tanned at once or cured so as to be kept without deterioration until a convenient time for tanning arrives. They are cured by being stretched free of wrinkles, flesh side exposed, and left in a cool, shady, airy place. In a moist atmosphere, or where haste is imperative, the flesh side may be covered with a layer of salt and the skin folded hair side out into a compact bundle, which should be opened and refolded two or three times during the first two days to insure salt action in every part. Flat skins may be stretched by pinning them out on a floor or frame, but in any case there should always be a circulation of air on both sides. Pelts of fur animals are dried, flesh side out, after being drawn over pieces of board shaped so as to stretch them uniformly. Wolf, fox, lynx, and wild cat pelts are taken from the boards and turned fur side out before they are fully dried. Other kind of pelts go to market flesh side out.

Skins may be tanned either with the hair on or off, as desired. Hair can be removed from hides by soaking them in tepid water made alkaline by lye or lime. The following recipe for a tanning liquor is in common use: To each gallon of water add one quart of salt and one-half ounce of sulphuric acid. This mixture should not be kept in a metal container. Thin skins are tanned by this liquor in one day; heavy skins must remain in it longer. They may remain in it indefinitely without harm. When removed from this liquor, they are washed several times in soapy water, wrung as dry as possible, and rubbed on the flesh side with a cake of hard soap. They are then folded in the middle, lengthwise over a line, hair side out, and left to dry. When both surfaces are barely dry, and the interior is still moist, they are laid over a smooth, rounded board and scraped on the flesh side with the edge of a worn flat file, or a similar blunt-edged tool. In this way an inner layer is removed and the skins become nearly white in color. They are then stretched, rubbed, and twisted until quite dry. If parts of a skin are still hard and stiff, the soaping, drying, and stretching process is repeated until the entire skin is soft. Fresh butter, or other animal fat, worked into skins while warm and then worked out again in dry hardwood saw dust, or extracted by a hasty bath in gasoline, increases their softness.



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SKINNING.

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CURING.

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TANNING.

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